

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE MORAL INDIVIDUALISM OF *RU*

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ABSTRACT

May Fourth Movement is often credited with women's liberation. Yet before the word "liberation" is overused, it is necessary to talk about what is behind this fabulous word. Chapter one will mainly discuss whether women needed such liberation and whether the May Fourth Movement really helped women to be liberated. The conclusion tries to argue that the May Fourth Movement did not liberate anyone. It simply changed people's way of living; women were the focus.

After May Fourth Movement, Confucianism, *ru* as translated here, has experienced ups and downs, and reenters Chinese people's life, as both an ancient thought and a remodeled imported study. Chapter two tries to argue that *ru* cannot be taken as a pure religion, or mixed up with Marxism. Moral individualism within Confucianism is a practical philosophy. To better understand moral individualism within Confucianism, the best way is to go back to Confucian classics.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Wenteng Shao is currently a graduate student at Cornell University, working on her master degree in Asian Studies. Her research has delved into such topics as intellectual history and feminism in modern China. She received her Master's Degree in English Language and Literature at Tsinghua University in 2005 and undergraduate degree in English at Nankai University in 2002, People's Republic of China.

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CHAPTER 1

A CHANGE THAT CHINESE WOMEN HAD TO ACCEPT—“LIBERATION”

Ai Siqi claims that the May Fourth Movement was a people's awakening movement (106), while Qu Qiubai characterizes the May Fourth Movement as primarily a bourgeois cultural movement (K. Liu 73). Both explain their points of view strongly and fully, and both represent views from a political consideration—interestingly, both are from the Chinese Communist Party. No doubt the May Fourth Movement is quite relevant to the political movement, as regards the situation of the first couple of decades of 20th century. However, it will be an endless debate if we base our argument on the division of class—the people or the bourgeoisie, because in that case, the first thing we need to do is to define who belongs to which class. In some cases, the bourgeoisie are part of the people; in some other cases, they are the enemy of the people. The definition is completely subjective. This paper will give up those dividing lines of class, but mainly focus on the influence that the May Fourth Movement had on human beings, particularly on women.

China of the Early 20th Century Needed Women's Liberation

The term “women's liberation” has been talked about and exaggerated for over a century. This particular notion grows with Chinese modern history. After the

Taiping Rebellion and Opium Wars, around the end of 19th century, the notion of women's rights began to arise.

During the Hundred Days Reform in 1898, the bourgeois reformers, like Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, started to pay attention to women's issues. However, they dared not to talk about equal rights for men and women. ...Kang fought openly against foot binding, yet he never published any article about equality between men and women. The *Book of Great Harmony*, which did mention equal rights between men and women, was written after the Hundred Days Reform, and published long after that. Liang introduced women's education in the West, yet he was reluctant to talk about the situation in China. (J. Liu 79)

The Qing government also issued an order to stop foot binding, and advocated women's education. All these were very specific actions in women's everyday life. If we call it the first step in the women's movement, this would be the reform stage. "In the era of the 1911 Revolution, people like Sun Zhongshan and Cai Yuanpei had a clear view about the women's liberation movement. They supported the development of women's organizations" (J. Liu 403). The women's movement, in this second stage, was actively carried out, yet from top down, so it was limited. With the deepening of influences of imperialist powers in China, the modernizers of the May Fourth Movement realized that to mobilize all the Chinese people was the only way to fight against the imperialist countries. Women, half of the population, joined the movement as a very important revolutionary force under this social

background. “After the 1911 Revolution failed, a couple of intellectuals started the New Cultural Movement—*New Youth* as their banner. They fought against the Confucian ritual and feudal autocracy. For the first time, women’s liberation and family revolution were openly and massively talked about” (Ding 157). In other words, the women’s liberation movement in the May Fourth period became mass culture, which pushed the movement from the bottom up.

The identification of women with backwardness and dependency acquired a new urgency in the May Fourth-New Culture period (1915-1927). As imperialist aggressions intensified, the victimized woman became the symbol of the Chinese nation itself, “raped” and dominated by virile foreign powers. Women’s enlightenment thus became a prerequisite for the political liberation of the nation as a whole as well as for China’s entrance into the modern world. In short, women’s subjugation to the patriarch epitomized the savageries of old China, the roots of its present-day humiliation. The image of the victimized feudal woman was vested with such powerful nationalist sentiments that it assumed the mantle of unassailable historical truth.”(Ko 1-2)

It didn’t matter whether women needed liberation or not. It was China that needed women’s liberation. Therefore women could act as a strong revolutionary force to fight against the imperialist powers. So long as this served the nation, women should be liberated. The women’s liberation of China in the early 20th century was for China, not for Chinese women.

Chinese Women Needed No Liberation

“The May Fourth Movement ... marked the emergence of women, and the foundation of the PRC [People’s Republic of China] marked the transformation of women from slaves to citizens” (Meng and Dai 263). Yet one needs to stop here and think about the word “liberation.” If there was a need to “liberate” women as a group, then that implied this group was previously oppressed. Then two questions here are “have women been oppressed?” and “who has oppressed them?” It seems that the answers to the hundred-years of discussions are “yes” and “men”.

In her book *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, Dorothy Ko gives a detailed description of women’s activities in the 17th century Jiangnan district of China. She gradually reveals a scroll of the life experiences of a renowned woman—Shen Yixiu, before and after her marriage, her interaction with her friends, cousins, daughters, and the females in her realm. In this book, Ko shows the readers that women in the 17th century could be writers, editors, and even publishers. Although some people argue that this is a particular case in the Jiangnan region, an economically developed area, it is safe to say that “it [Ko’s book] challenges assumptions about Chinese women that have prevailed since the beginning of this century, when modernizers claimed to offer women their first opportunity at education” (Widmer 892-893).

As Ko admits in her introduction to the book that “any historical study of women and gender should be class-, locale-, and age-specific” (7), she also says that “the nature and degree of power that a woman could exercise depended not only on her social position and the task at hand but also on such factors as her personal skills

and her position in the life cycle” (11). Ko agrees that status is one of the most important factors in determining a woman’s identity, and this status fluctuates as well. Yet in her book, she decides to avoid the discussion of status, but mainly focuses on certain women’s communities which “suggest that this particular form of women’s culture was limited to elite women or women in affluent areas with opportunities for education” (16-17). Therefore, though Ko’s vivid description shows us a very different image of women in 17th-century south China, she hardly touches the root of this situation.

The traditional distinction of responsibility of men and women was men for affairs outside family, and women for affairs within family. The distinction itself, in other words, showed that the roles of men and women were separate more than they were unequal, and neither men nor women had much choice in these roles. It was hard to explain why the outside needed to liberate the inside. Only with smooth cooperation could families and the society keep moving forward.

Yet this did not mean that women had equal rights with men, because the power division of Chinese society had not been based on one’s gender, but on status. Eastman gave a summarizing conclusion of Chinese society: “China was a status-oriented society in which social relationships tended to be structured vertically; all social relationships tended to be between individuals who acted as either a superior or subordinate in the relationship” (Eastman 288).

In the inner family quarters where the husbands seldom entered there was a hierarchy among the women: mother-in-law as the superior, daughter-in-law as the

subordinate. When a daughter-in-law gave birth to a male heir, her status would be promoted to a higher level, higher than those who only bore a female heir. When the husbands appeared in the family circle, the order needed to be adjusted (The husbands were supposed to work outside the family during the day. Some working as government officials even performed their duty in a different area which was far from home.) But if the position of father-in-law was vacant, it was hard to say who had the superior position in the family—the mother-in-law or the eldest son, i.e., female or male. If women were all oppressed, then it would be the son acting as the head anywhere. However, the fact was different. In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, there is one time when Jia Zheng (the family head) is irritated by his son Baoyu and beats him so severely that the whole family comes to Baoyu's rescue. Baoyu's grandmother—Jia Zheng's mother—becomes very angry at this punishment, and blames Jia Zheng. (Jia Zheng's father—the absent father-in-law—has died a long time before). Jia Zheng yields. He kneels down and swears to his mother that he will never do it again. Here in family matters, Jia Zheng has to obey the will of a female—his mother—even if he is the officially and publicly recognized family head. In fact, Jia Zheng, as the family head, only appears on several formal occasions in this novel. To say that women as a whole were oppressed by men was not accurate.

Moreover, a good wife needed not only to serve her husband, bear heirs (male heirs in particular), but also to manage the economic affairs and balance relationships within the family. As in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, to run a family of

several hundred people was just as, if not more difficult than, running a big company (one reason of difficulty was because you could not lay off a family member). To become eligible, one needed to do a lot of study. Yet this process was not self-study, but directed study—directed by the mother-in-law. The men’s world was more like today’s professional training. To gain a knowledge of one particular career, no matter whether a butcher or a government official, one needed to follow the teacher/superior’s instructions. The teacher/ superior role included both benign mother and strict father—to help with kindness and scold with severity. Sometimes the scolding could be so severe that it looked like a kind of oppression. In the women’s world, the mother-in-law was giving her daughter-in-law professional training as well—to discipline/ train her to be a responsible family operator in the future. Through the instruction of the mother-in-law, kind or severe, the daughter-in-law got the information she needed to run the family. If a daughter-in-law was scolded by her mother-in-law, we could not say she was oppressed, simply because the one scolding her was her “mother,” though only in law. Or we could say she was oppressed, but this person was also a woman, not a man. Then the question becomes which level of women should have been liberated—perhaps only daughters-in-law. But as time passed, the previous daughter-in-law became mother-in-law herself. Women’s status was changing, rather than immobile.

“As for the ‘deep structure’ of Chinese culture, it has an aim of stable purpose...the ‘conscientious system’ of Chinese people results in a tendency to find a shelter for both one’s ‘body’ and ‘heart’” (Sun 9). In a sense, it was not a bad thing

if everyone was clear about his/ her position and could find a position/ shelter for him/ herself. This could be the educational result of Confucian doctrine. Confucius promoted ritual, which was indeed a way of behavior. If everyone could behave appropriately according to the ritual standard, then the whole society would function well. This applied to both men and women. (This is not to promote Confucius. Since Confucian doctrine was more like the law in ancient China, so that to obey Confucius then is comparable to obeying the law of today.)

In the public sphere—the men’s world—a complete set of rules needed to be observed, i.e., officials needed to kowtow to the emperor; officials of different levels wore different colored robes, etc. “The officials did not only ‘emperor-ize and father-ize the rulers, but also ‘woman-ized’ themselves” (Sun 208). Though Sun Longji used this metaphor to indicate the emasculation of Chinese men, it could also mean that in the men’s world, there were also some “women figures.” If there was a need to liberate women, those “women figures” should also be included. Then no one under heaven would not be liberated, because even the emperor needed to kowtow to Heaven, which was said to be the ultimate ruler of the world.

Within the family realm, the rules, though not as clearly written as the public laws, were also strictly carried out: mother-in-law as the ruler, all other women ranking below her like officials of different levels. In this way, the mother-in-law functioned as the “male figure” in this family field, like Jia Mu—Baoyu’s grandmother. No one would bother to liberate her in the novel, because she was the one that spoke. Given the account above, we need to say that because China had

been a status-oriented society, every person, man or woman, was in one way or another oppressed; or the other way around—no one was oppressed. If we could not say that the officials were oppressed by the emperor, then we could not say the women were oppressed either. If the officials needed to be liberated from the emperor—from kowtowing to absolute authority, from rituals imposed without consent—then this looked more like 21st century America (which believes in freedom and equal rights), rather than Chinese feudal society before the May Fourth Movement (which was proud of its monarchism and ritual system).

Everything had an order—both inside the family and outside it. If this was the order that worked and the two sides both enjoyed it, then no liberation was necessary. Just as in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, it was natural for women to take care of the family affairs. No one—no man—in this big family tried to change the situation. If the one (woman) in charge was absent, it was not the man that would take over the responsibility, but another woman would be appointed to assume the power. For example, after Qin Keqing dies, nee You—Jia Zhen's wife—cannot perform her regular role of family operator because of sickness. In that case, it is not Jia Zhen himself who steps forward to take care of the family affairs. He invites another woman—Wang Xifeng—to help deal with the funeral of Qin Keqing. Both men and women feel natural about this appointment. Wang Xifeng fully demonstrates her ability and Jia Zhen gains time to deal with the visitors and officials outside the inner court. From the result we can tell that both men and women enjoyed this arrangement.

Family, in the eyes of the May Fourth reformers, was no longer a place full of warm- heartedness, but became a prison that all women needed to escape. This was not the truth. If a woman was satisfied with what she was doing, and her husband appreciated that, there was simply no need to force them to leave the family.

Strict Boundary between Men and Women

Because there was a distinction between the responsibility of men and women, it was inappropriate (even forbidden) for either side to interfere with the affairs of the other side. It would have been inappropriate for a father-in-law to punish a daughter-in-law if she made a mistake. A traditional good father-in-law would have left those family matters to the mother-in-law, the head of the internal family management.

Unless some disaster happened, this [family] was an “area” that the male seldom entered. This area was composed of women, under the charge of the mother-in-law, who was the female family head. It was a world of trivial fights between women, fights using means both open and secret. (Meng and Dai 233)

Similarly, it would have been inappropriate for women to interfere with public affairs, outside the family.

One example was that women’s literacy was limited. Before the Qing emperor abolished the imperial civil service exam in 1905, the intellectuals were those who passed the exam. Ever since the imperial civil service exam was set up, intellectuals

strove to pass it in order to win a position in the bureaucratic system. “Formal gentry status was a means of income” (Kuhn 222). To pass the exam was one of the most important, if not the only, way to enter the power system. So literacy had been associated with political power. Since women were not supposed to take care of public affairs, they were not encouraged to access literacy. In the literary history of China, female writers were like stars in a cloudy sky—shining but overcast by the thick clouds. In many stories, female writers were recorded as no less talented than their male counterparts. However, their literary ability was more considered as a contribution to family entertainment, rather than something that could bring them into the imperial court.

In terms of the important role the literati played in sovereignty, the political system of China was, to some extent, “litero-cracy”. The literati therefore became one of the most powerful communities—they held a position second only to the emperor, and were extremely influential compared to the peasant community or the merchant community. The scholars were all well educated in Confucian doctrine before they could be selected as officials. Jin Guantao believed this integrated ideology and political system fitted Chinese feudal society and created an ultra-stable system (33-34).

One important way to connect the different roles men and women played was through marriage. Through marriage, the smallest unit of society—family—started to function. Also through marriage, women were connected and exposed to the power system. In one way or another, a wife could manipulate some of her

husband's power. The only female emperor in Chinese history—Wu Ze Tian, started as a low-level concubine of Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty. She later gained the love of Emperor Gaozong—son of Taizong—and became empress. With the increase in her power, she set herself up as the first and the only female emperor. Over a thousand years later, Dong Wang Ge Cixi had a similar experience. Though she finally did not make herself into another Wu Ze Tian, she had the actual control of China for over half a century. In other words, how much power a woman could have depended on her husband; and how big the share was depended on how much love she could get from this man. These two examples were extreme, because their husbands were both emperors. But this also applied to all women in society. In other words, females were shielded from power due to the strict boundary, yet there was an indirect way for them to access power.

Men, first father then husband, determined women's social status and economic relationships. Men were the avenue that tied women to power in this case. In the regular cases of marriage, a girl was married by her parents to a boy in another family. The two families were like two knobs on the social network. When a girl became someone's wife, she was transferred from one knob to the other. Parents of the two families perform as dealers. Her social status fluctuated with her "physical" change. In some other cases, when the parent role was absent, it was a little bit complicated. The stereotype in Chinese novels was a lady from a high status family who fell in love with some poor scholar who happened to be parentless. But her parents would not let her because they belonged to different social classes—rich

parents versus poor scholar. The story could only have a happy ending when the poor scholar passed the imperial civil service exam. Only then could he win back his love, the respect of the parents-in-law, and a decent life. Although it was a love story, it was more like a personal history of struggle. The girl, after her first appearance, either died or was bound by her parents to her house, i.e., withdrawn from the audience's eyes, and faded into the background. Her reappearance depended on the man. Through men—and only through men, could women be connected to society again. Since men were in the middle between women and social power, the position of men was very important. Often, men played a very dynamic/ active role while women played a comparatively static (not necessarily passive) role. That's why men seemed to take a dominant role in men-women relationships. However, it did not necessarily mean that men were oppressing women.

In some other cases, if a woman tried to access the power system without the avenue of a man, she was considered inappropriate, and even sinful. One famous play called *Shuang Jiu Ju* 《双救举》 (adapted in the 1950s by Wang Zhaoqian into *Female Son-in-Law* 《女驸马》) presented such a violation, in which a girl named Feng Suzhen (冯素珍) pretended to be male and gained the first place in the imperial civil service exam. Her original intention was to get into the power system through the exam for the purpose of rescuing her fiancé. Later, because of her “beauty” and intelligence, she was picked as the husband for the princess. The night she married the princess, she had no choice but to tell her “wife” the truth. Angered by this, the princess threatened to send her to immediate death. Feng pleaded and

pleaded for her family's sake. Finally she won the princess's sympathy and even the forgiveness of the emperor. Feng's fiancée was saved, and the opera had a happy ending: Any woman who entered the power system without approval would be considered to have committed a capital offense, even if she had superior intelligence and was recognized as the foremost scholar in the imperial civil service exam.

Feng was an outstanding woman, literate and smart. Yet her leaving home and her knowledge did not bring her anything good, but only danger. For other women who happened to be outside their family circle, marriage was the only way to bail them out of their career limitations and return them to where they should belong. In *Travels of Lao Can*, two prostitutes earned Lao Can and his friend's fondness. At first, they were just dolls of the men. As the story told us, one of them was from a former official's family. Because of family upheaval, she had been sold as a prostitute. This greatly aroused Lao Can's sympathy. This sympathy later developed into a sort of love that led to the happy ending of the two girls marrying their patrons.

When Emerald Ring heard this she hastily knelt down before the bed and kowtowed to Mr. Huang and Lao Can, saying: "My two benefactors and saviors, who are willing to give silver to rescue me from my torment, I don't care what work you give me as slave-girl or servant, I shall be grateful for it." (E. Liu 151)

Actually the girl had no way to go other than marrying the patron, even if she left the brothel. Another example in the novel was Bai Niu and Hei Niu, who were

making a living by singing opera. Though their singing was good enough to earn a living, in China, singers were regarded one of the lowest classes, similar to prostitutes. Their destination was also to marry someone, which was considered to be a good lot for them. After marriage, they were not supposed to do any public performance any more. In other words, there was no legal, decent way for women to live on their own in society. No matter high or low her status was, the only good way paved for them was to get married. Kinship was the only way to connect women to the social network, by father or by husband.

If we think about Eastman's words about the status-oriented society of China again, I would say Chinese were not only lineally hierarchical, but also interlocked with each other and their functions were not exchangeable. Women were connected to men, and men were connected to the power system. This was a one-way road. While the entire society was operated by the two large groups, women and men, the borderline was clearly cut. Though Wu Ze Tian ascended the throne, she returned the power to her husband's family before she died, and forbade her daughter to become emperor. As the only one woman in history trying to blur the borderline between men and women, one of her feet had already crossed the dividing line. Yet after 22 years she finally decided to step back—to remain on the (morally) safe side of the line. She even refused to comment on her own deeds since her tablet was left blank, with no inscription.

May Fourth's Misunderstanding of "Liberation"

With the abolishment of the imperial civil service exam, the literati suddenly lost their distinct perquisites, opportunities, and hope. The most powerful community, represented by those Confucian-trained scholars, was pressed to the bottom of society. The military staff and imperial forces occupied the leading position of the society. Those new forces made China a disordered society without a mainstream power. Yet to put it in a good way, those previously marginal cultures had a chance to speak out, and the women's world was one of them. In the early 20th century, women were allowed to leave the "inner chamber," to take classes in some schools for the first time. Men and women not bound by kinship, for the first time, could eat and talk under the same roof. Women could work in some public areas, and got paid. All these were the positive side of this movement. But because these women's activities were born out of the huge wave of the anti-imperialist movement, it never gave the woman enough time to rethink it.

As we said, women's world, before this era, was mainly inside the family. Their lives were protected by the wall of the house. But then the May Fourth advocates told women that they should go outside and see what's happening there. To see the outside was not a bad thing, but the May Fourth leaders did not start it from the women's point of view.

During the May Fourth Movement, one of the slogans that the proponents put forward was "women's liberation." This encouraged women to leave the family, to enter society and to work. Even within the family, women were told that they had

equal rights as their husbands. For example, the word “divorce” was never mentioned before this era. But then, it was not only talked about, but also carried out. Among the May Fourth leaders, some divorces did happen. As Gilmartin recounts, “Chen Duxiu was very unhappy with his arranged marriage to Gao Dazhong...in 1910, he decided to leave her” (306). “In fact, quite a number of Communist men married again without obtaining a divorce from their rural wives” (307). There was to be a sexual revolution, but it applied only to those who advocated it. Even the Communist Party members, representatives of the loudest voice for women’s liberation, mistook male-centered sexual revolution for women’s liberation. Some other examples showed that wives of these leaders still performed their traditional role of “good wives.” Li Dazhao, one of the most prominent leaders of the May Fourth Movement and some other public activities, wrote in 1919 that

we Orientals have an even stranger attitude toward this issue. We talk about ... how women should be men’s helper inside the home, taking care of things relating to ‘the inner quarters.’ The spirit of modern democracy is intended to enable everyone who shares in the organization and lifestyle of a democratic community, regardless of race, gender, class, and regional background, to have equal opportunities in politics, society, economics, and education...” (Lan 187)

However, within his own family, his wife Zhao Renlan was performing exactly what he described above—“a self-sacrificing, illiterate woman, who attended to their children and the menial work around the house so that her husband could devote

maximum time to his studies and to his public life as a Party leader and teacher” (Gilmartin 318). The pattern of this family was no different from the ancient notion that husbands were in charge of the outside affairs, and wives in charge of the inside affairs. In other words, liberation was for other women, not for the one in “my” family. This kind of sexual revolution, which was actually a repackaged traditional family order, had little resemblance to real women’s liberation.

Besides the bias towards women in families remaining unchanged, the biased view towards women in society was similarly unchanged. Although by the end of the nineteenth century, some male intellectuals who had progressive views initiated the cause of women’s education, the purpose was not for women’s liberation, but because “these progressive thinkers realized that China could become strong and prosperous only if its citizens were enlightened” (Eastman 215). In other words, the education was for political reasons, not for the women’s own sake. Within the Chinese Communist Party, there were no female leaders at all. Not until the Second Party Congress did the Chinese Communist Party have female members. Some early female figures in the party “did not achieve their own, independent status in the Party, but rather their roles were legitimated through their relationship with prominent Communist leaders” (Gilmartin 313). If they left their prominent husbands, “an unattached female lost her access to the world of high politics in the Chinese Communist Party” (Gilmartin 316). An example was Xiang Jingyu, wife of Cai Hesen. Both of them were activists during May Fourth Movement. Cai was a communist leader, while Xiang became leader of Women’s Bureau after marrying

Cai. In one letter Xiang wrote to her friend Tao Yi:

This year, a new current of thought began sweeping over a small number of people in our country. Because we believe that the well-being of humanity cannot be achieved without equity in social development, we want to raise the benighted half of the population who are women out of their hellish existence. Thus, the cry for ‘Women’s emancipation! Women’s emancipation!’ grows louder every day.” (Lan 125)

From this letter, we could tell that Xiang was so excited about the movement that she urged her friend to join it. But unfortunately we did not know whether her friend followed her advice—to sell everything to come join this great movement or not. Also we could not tell whether this was really a good thing for her friend, because only a couple of years later, “when her [Xiang Jingyu’s] relationship with Cai Hesen began to deteriorate and she decided to become involved in an affair with Peng Shuzhi, she lost her unofficial standing on the CEC [Central Executive Committee] and her command of the Communist Women’s Bureau” (Gilmartin 316). Under the lead of these people, the spirit of women’s liberation became “the male perspective on gender issues”(Gilmartin 304), which served their own personal and political needs. “During the May Fourth period, journals devoted to the subject of women were prepared by and for men who were in the process of shaping the new China” (Witke 129).

Liberation didn’t simply mean that men should tell women what to do, but liberation of the way of thinking. The slogan of “women’s liberation” was initiated

by men, carried out by men, and misused by men. It was the men who took the lead in this great movement. Women's voice was, to a large extent, not heard.

The Dilemma of Women

Su Qing's *Married for Ten Years* could be taken as a good example here. Huaiqing, the main character of this novel, female, has been married for ten years.

In the first half of this novel, Su Qing showed a tragi-comedy of a traditional non-nuclear family in feudalist China. In the second half of this novel and her other works, she put emphasis on the 'New Female Myths' on women after the May Fourth Movement, and showed the dilemma that the "new" women lived in. (Meng and Dai 239).

The experience of Huaiqing could be taken as typical of women around the May Fourth period. She and her husband were schoolmates, yet they got married following their parents' will. After May Fourth, they were entitled the right of divorce. Here I don't want to repeat her married life, which is typical of those big families: fights between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, giving birth to children, and enduring a husband's love affair. What I want to focus on is her two experiences as a writer.

Huaiqing's two experiences as a writer both are due to the economic problems of the family. The first time she starts to write is before her giving birth to her son. She gives it up after a couple of articles. One reason is because her husband does not like her writing; the other reason is that the economic condition of the family is getting

better. She does not need to earn a living by writing anymore. By the end of the novel, Huaiqing restarts her writing when her husband has an affair and is short of money again. She has to write to support both herself and the children. Huaiqing does not write for fun, or to please herself, or to realize her personal value—to put it in modern words. She tells herself and the reader that this is all for the children. “Women with children were fearless, because no women under heaven would shirk the responsibility” (Su 185). This was true when the bread-earning responsibility was on the mothers. Yet this was no different from those illiterate women in traditional societies doing some needlework or laundry to help support their family. As long as this “going out” was for someone else—children, parents, family—rather than for herself, women’s way of thinking was not changed. Huaiqing’s going out to work and her final divorce with her husband are all labeled “for the children’s sake”. She herself does not enjoy the experience, because this is due to the husband’s irresponsibility. In the middle of the novel when her husband is responsible and supportive, Huaiqing seems much happier.

In chapter 16, she writes, “although it was troublesome for a woman to stay at home, it was more troublesome to work outside” (Su 119). In chapter 24, the hardship becomes worse when she has to support the family all by herself, while her husband is away:

I first laid Maid Chen off. Then I took care of the kids during the day, and wrote articles at night. Often I sat there alone till midnight. It was really hot and suffocating during summer. I had to write the articles while waving the

fan to bring some cool air to the kids. Otherwise if they woke up because of the heat, my thoughts would be disrupted. Then I could not finish until the next morning. Although I wrote pretty often, the editors were not eager to publish. Some were quick at publishing my articles, yet they were reluctant to pay me. I strove in earnest. (Su 185)

The first step is already so hard that the author used such detailed description to tell the reader that it was not easy to “go outside and see,” let alone taking the second step—divorce.

In the sequel to *Married for Ten Years*, when she did divorce her husband, Huaiqing said more than once that “I regretted it. I really should not have signed the divorce agreement” (Su 196). “I wanted to go back [home]. I did not want this divorce anymore” (Su 198)! “Women should take care of children and husband. Who would like to “Strive! Strive! Struggle! Struggle! I wish men and women were not equal. I wish to be a slave of my family” (Su 202)! People around her—her mother and her friends—all showed sympathy to her, saying it was pathetic for a woman to get divorced. She admits that “if a woman around thirty got divorced, that was for sure not because of her. She was forced to keep her dignity. She had to leave her home, her children—all these were granted by the new trend [May Fourth Movement]” (Su 306). Here, though the author does not say it openly, she is in fact blaming the new trend—the May Fourth Movement—for her unhappy situation.

In one of articles called *Swelling Wave*, Su Qing described her personal experience when she was twelve (1926; she was born 1914), still a student at school.

Seven years after the May Fourth Movement, women had already been mobilized to attend national affairs, but their situation was still embarrassing. “It was three days before the Double-Ten Day rally that we received the notice of the lantern festival. All the students were excited and eager to go....In the end, altogether four hundred and sixty seven female students (this was an all-girls school) were gathered together to join the demonstration, for the purpose of celebrating Double-Ten Day” (309-310). However, “they were pinched and leered at by rowdies in the streets and forced to retire from the demonstration. Su Ch’ing lost little of her taste for activism, but gained a new skepticism with it, admitting that ‘this society has really been unable to modernize and develop.’...Su Ch’ing’s essay ends on a minor key of reflection and skepticism: the social movements and upheavals, the ‘swelling wave’ has washed her up on a dry shore and departed, leaving her still not yet mature and yet stripped of that road to maturity...” (Gunn 71). In another article *Women’s Education in China*, Su Qing blamed it directly, “My academic performance, was not a bit less than the male students of my level. ... However, my current situation of loneliness and bitterness was all due to the [new] education” (8). It was the May Fourth Movement, according to Su Qing, that led to all the embarrassing situations and unhappy ending. The May Fourth Movement did not necessarily have an entirely negative effect, but it did have major side effects to women’s lives without their permission.

In the novel *Married for Ten Years*, Huaiqing is literate—she has married while she was in high school. Yet her husband does not allow her to write articles, or to

read his collection of books and daily newspapers. In another family when the husband named Lu Jie wanted to leave his wife, the wife begs for his mercy because she cannot support the family all by herself. The husband tells her: “why didn’t you write some articles like Miss Su [Huaiqing]?! She was divorced and she could earn money, why couldn’t you” (Su 348)? This poor wife is not literate; however, she becomes the victim of this new trend as well. Before the May Fourth Movement, women were limited to family. At the same time, they were protected by the family. Now they were pushed to leave their home, with the men standing behind them and teasingly saying: “Yes, you can. Go ahead.” No matter whether there was a cliff in front of them, women had to go forward, their leeway was blocked by the men.

Conclusion

As presented in this paper, liberation did not apply to women’s situation in China during the early 20th century. During that time, all forces were emerging, and struggling with each other. The women’s movement was hastily carried out without thinking whether it was necessary or appropriate. To stay at home did not mean to be bound, and was not necessarily something that women didn’t like; to go out of the family did not equal being free and may not have been what they were eager to do. This was a “to be or not to be” question—to go outside or not to go outside. It was never liberation for Hamlet to take the step, and it was hard to say that leaving home to go out into society was liberation or stalemate for women. More than eighty years after the movement, women’s situation is very different now. Women work today,

but in order to keep their job, pregnant women need to work until even just before giving birth to the child. Six weeks after delivery, the new mother needs to go back to work, leaving the new-born to someone who can never be the same as mother. Young child and mother are parted due to the women's liberation movement. To gain the right to go outside family, women lost their benefits within the family—the benefits of maternity and protection. Although the May Fourth Movement did usher the great women's movement into Chinese society, it was lost in the huge, roaring anti-imperialist wave, which was later developed into the pursuit of male-centered national identity. To put it neutrally and practically, in this trend, women's living style was changed, for better or for worse. Yet, liberation was too positive a word to describe the movement.

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CHAPTER 2

MORAL INDIVIDUALISM—MODERN POTRYAL OF *RU*

At the beginning of 2011, a 31 ft. statue of Confucius was established on Tian'anmen square. Only after about 100 days, the statue was removed from this political center of China to a park of statues. Without any well-grounded explanation of this come-and-go, this incident was widely discussed in China, though the public media kept silent on this topic. The silence, of course, did not mean that they had no idea of this incident; on the contrary, it showed the controversy of this topic, which was highly related to the social background of China today. Big as it is, China is still one of the developing countries, working hard on its economic and social performance. The economic success of “Four Asian Tigers” is often ascribed to stick with Confucianism. We are not to discuss the relationship between Confucianism and economic development here. However, this fever has eventually aroused the attention of people within China. A lot more publications on Confucianism could prove this.

As for the wide spread of Confucianism, in what way should we promote it worth thinking and discussing. The traditional Confucianism is part of the political system (we will discuss below); the newly-emerged line which comes from outside China has multiple focuses: some relate to economic performance, some relate to human community. With the increasing acceptance of Confucianism among different countries, more and more interpretations will emerge and very possibly be accepted. To follow which line will be the very popular topic in the Chinese community within China. This paper argues that the value within Confucianism—moral individualism—should be

broadly advocated. If we peel off its political labels, cultural influences and other decorations, the whole system of Confucianism is mainly around one core—to enhance one’s moral performance, i.e., moral individualism. With this value, people from different areas of the world could have a common ground to share. Also this paper advocates that this particular value only can be obtained through literary reading of Confucian classics, rather than piling extra “meanings” to it. Since Confucianism could be translated as “*ruxue*”, “*rujiao*”, “*kongjiao*” etc., each of which has slight difference, this paper here will use *ru*, as a comprehensive term for these above mentioned ones.

Ru Should Not Be Taken as a Pure Religion

The definition of religion is always controversial: some people say religion is miracle, some say it is unquestionable fact. Yet one shared feature of religions is that they all try to explain the origin of the universe and human being: in Christianity, the God creates men, women and everything thereafter; in Buddhism, some immortal beings from outer universe come to the earth, and later change into human being because of their lust for the delicious food on earth; Daoism, though not giving any fairy tales, does give the name of the origin of everything—*Dao*, which developed into one, two, and everything else. Compared with these religions, *Ru* never talks about this topic. What Confucius works on is human relationships and social network.

According to Makeham, some intellectuals like Tu Wei-ming and Li Zehou take *ruxue* as a “blend” of both religion and philosophy; some like Jiang Qing regards *rujiao* as “both a religion and a set of cultural and ritual norms” (273); others like Mou Zongsan considers “a high degree of religiosity” of *rujiao*. These leading scholars all

add a religious color to *ru*. This is understandable, but questionable. On the one hand, many temples of Confucius are established for people to worship at, which makes it look like a religious worshipping activity, like Christianity or Buddhism. On the other hand, as Chang perceives it, *ru* “emphasizes social harmony and political stability through a proper equilibrium of relations between family members and between people of different political ranks” (230). In other words, this suggests that *ru* is a moral code, a system of principle for the society to perform—ren 仁 (Benevolence), xiao 孝 (filial piety), li 礼 (propriety), yi 义 (righteousness). No matter how many different interpretations have been made during the past thousands of years, these four core rules appears to be fundamentally about human relationships, not abstract ideology which exists beyond the realistic world. Although Tian (Heaven) and Di (Earth) are often mentioned in Confucian classics, they are woven into the human world as natural elements. This is different from Buddhism, which asks people to pursue a post-mortem life, giving up everything and retreating from current life. Although Buddhists also ask people to work, to help humans and animals in this life, it is more due to the belief of “one good turn deserves another (in next life)”.

To better explain why *ru* is not a religion, we need to look back at its origin. Started as a minor official in the state of Lu, Confucius pursued the ancient rituals performed in Zhou dynasty. Though it experienced fluctuation, *ru* kept being the mainstream among intellectuals, partly because the Confucian classics were taken as the official materials in the Imperial Exams. Together with Buddhism and Taoism, *ru* was regarded as one of the three teachings in China. The start of Confucian School was a man, from birth to death, trying to establish his teaching, not about any supernatural

power or stories. However, after Confucius' death, many stories about supernatural phenomena related to Confucius did appear. One reasonable and convincing explanation, provided by Ku Chieh-kang, founder of Doubting Antiquity school, could be summarized as the more distant the history is, the more deified it becomes—euhemerization in reverse. Though Ku's focus is on Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, we could get some hints for the story of Confucius. One example is there are various kinds of Confucius' portrait: the image of Confucius changes with the alternation of dynasties. People add different features to the imaginary Confucius. In fact, "the term *zongjiao*, or 'religion', did not exist in the Chinese vocabulary until the turn of twentieth century." (Sun 233).

Even as of today, the Confucian scholars are still working on their predecessor's literary works. The reason why these literary works were read over and over again is not because people expect to get supernatural power from it, but to conduct self-cultivation. Even the most metaphysical *Yijing* in the six classics provides the reader with only knowledge of the past and future—the pattern of different worlds, not superstitious ways to react to it. In other words, *Yijing* is more about to know it rather than trying to control it or even defeat it. In fact, what Confucius promotes is the Zhou rites, together with its embodiment in humaneness and righteousness. During all his life, he was not a successful official, but a really great teacher. The textbooks he used were the rites from Zhou and other ancient literary works. His aim was to restore the ancient Zhou rites by teaching that, and hoped to save the world of his time from moral degeneration. In Zhou rites, as Confucius noted down, every single movement of a person should be performed according to the standard. Take one most common event for example: If a

person was invited to dinner, he should not accept it immediately. Instead he should refuse twice before finally accept it. There were even specific names for the two refusals. When one arrived at the host's, the host should lead the guest into the room. And according to Zhou rites, to ascend the stairs, the host should be on the right of the guest and use his right foot first; while the guest, on the left of the host, should use his left foot first. Finally when a person was ready to eat, he would notice that all the meals were strictly arranged: meat with bones on the left, meat without bones on the right, rice/ grain made foodstuffs on the near left, soup on the neat right. There was nothing mysterious behind these acts. These were just like table manner—the standard that everyone should learn and follow.

Even if we trace back to Confucius—the founder of *ru*, it is clear that he is not prone to mystic legends. In *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (The Annals of Lü Buwei), Duke Ai of Lu asked Confucius about “Kui”, an ancient rectifier of music who, according to legend, had just one foot. In the possible deification of ancient figures, Confucius chose the opposite—euhemerization. His explanation to Duke Ai of Lu was that the rumor about Kui's one foot was a misunderstanding of the original text, which could also be interpreted as “there is only one like Kui, and that is enough. Therefore, the statement traditionally taken to mean ‘Kui has one foot,’ really means ‘with Kui, one is enough’ [enough and foot being written the same way]”. (Lü 583) In a word, Confucius himself was trying to downgrade the mystic aspect of the story to the real life. Actually, Confucius was said to be the one that euhemerized Chinese mystery into the history (the other important figure did this is Sima Qian). Though after his death, some of his deeds

were retold in an exaggerated way, it would be hard to imagine the Confucius would accept his followers to make him a god, although some of them did that.

With the import of Western religions, however, to set up a Chinese native religion became one of topics in late 19th century. Kang Youwei in 1898 suggested that *ru* should be taken as the “state religion”, i.e., he wanted to promote *ru* to become *rujiao* or *kongjiao*. He also urged that “Confucian churches” (Chow 290) should be set up all over China. This was the first time that *Ru* was clearly suggested as a religion, instead of teaching, compared with the long existence of Buddhism in China. However, even during Kang’s time, some groups openly disagreed with the proposal. Liang Qichao, prominent student of Kang, also one of the leading scholars of the time, “refused to consider Confucius a religious figure...”. (Billoud & Thoraval 93) After Kang’s proposal, few scholars continued to promote *ru* as a religion. Moreover the participants of May Fourth Movement disregarded *ru* as feudal relics. After 1949, *ru* experienced unprecedented criticism and destruction. Only after 1980s did it reenter people’s field of vision.

Murray argues that the commonly accepted religions, like Daoism and Buddhism would bring benefits to individuals and their families, while *ru* would “confer benefit to society at large” (380). The word “benefit” is controversial here. To worship Confucius will not help one (and one’s families) get longevity or expel evils around. In this sense, to perform *ru* is not beneficial to individual’s physical health. To perform the rituals to Confucius is more like to show respect to one’s ancestors, to a morally superior sage, rather than to gain some protection or blessing from Buddha and Jesus. However, according to De Bary, the biggest difference between *ru* and other

religions is that *ru* lacks “sudden enlightenment” (36), instead it is long term self-cultivation. In other words, in the whole life of a Confucian scholar, he may never reach a point of a completely sublimated self. He is always in the process, using Confucian classics to help build up his/her character. He may not become a Buddha eventually, only a better person (better in the sense of more syncretized with the Confucian doctrines). This sounds a little bit lofty, but being good in pre-modern China is one of the most important, if not the only, standard of being promoted. Some officials get promoted simply because they are renowned for their filial piety. This immediate reward is another point that distinguishes *ru* and most religions, which ask people to work hard towards something unknown. In this sense, *ru* is more secular than spiritual. It is through spiritual way to reach material achievements. That could partly explain why there is always argument about whether *ru* is a religion or not. There are some spiritual elements in it, but these are only a minor part of *ru*. In its core, it is about personal life in the real world, no matter how fantastic the literary texts are and how mighty the statue (Confucius) is.

Some people may argue that Confucius talks about ghosts and spirits as well. Yet Confucius’s attitude towards ghost is to stay away. The non-existent forms, including spirits and ghosts, are not incorporated into the Confucian world. In *Analects*, once a disciple named Fanchi asks Confucius about his attitude of spirits. Confucius replies that “respect them, but keep distance from them” (论语 雍也 6.22). From here, we can safely interpret it as that “we” are different from spirits—“we” are human, not spirits. The ghost and spirits are not different stage of “us”. Once another disciple named Zilu asks Confucius about ghosts. Confucius answers “if you have not learned

how to serve the people, how could you serve the ghosts?” (论语先进第十一) From these examples, we can see that Confucius admits the existence of spirits, but he puts the study of human world as his priority. He does not show any interests in transforming his school into a pure study of spirits. The world of spirits is only part of his study.

In framing the relationship between *ru* and the spiritual realm, Feng Youlan, a new-Confucian scholar in the 20th century, puts *ru* in the third grade of his four spheres of living, first innocent sphere, second utilitarian, third moral, and fourth transcendent. As Feng interprets the four grades, the third grade—the moral sphere is the closest to *ru*.

“...a man may come to understand that a society exists, of which he is a member. This society constitutes a whole and he is a part of that whole. Having this understanding, he does everything for the benefits of the society, or as the Confucianists say, he does everything ‘for the sake of righteousness, and not for the sake of personal profit.’ He is the truly moral man and what he does has a moral significance.” (339)

As can be seen, *ru* is consciously separated from supernatural realm by some of the Confucian scholars. It seems that the more people are detached from the *ru*, the more mysterious *ru* will become. However, mystery does not equal to religion. To explain a mysterious scenario, one needs knowledge of it. For over two thousand years before the end of 19th century, *ru* had itself established in China as a complete system of knowledge. Only by diligently acquiring knowledge of every single book could one get self-cultivated. Therefore, a third difference that distinguishes *ru* from religion is

that *ru* focuses more on knowledge, while most religions emphasize both knowledge and belief, if belief is not more.

According to Dirlik, Tu [Wei-ming]’s view on *ru* as “ethico-spiritual” and “universalistic humanism” (255-258) would eventually lead to a general system, i.e., African *ru* would not be impossible. I agree that *ru* is surely possible in Africa, since the universal value in *ru* could be shared by everyone on this planet, as a cultural code, not personal worship. To perform *ru* as cultural/ behavior code may bring good to one’s life, but the result to perform it as a religion in foreign society is unforeseen.

Having talked much about the relationship between *ru* and (most) religions, this paper believes that the Chinese government, not to regard *ru* as a religion is a wise choice, because as we have discussed above, to do that is really far-fetching. As Ku Chieh-kang remarked that, after so much up-and-down, it is time to regard Confucius as a “gentleman” again. (Chow 308)

Ru Cannot be Incorporated with Marxism

China, as of today, is still one-party-lead country. Therefore, everything in the country is colored red (red is the color of CCP-Chinese Communist Country). *Ru* is no exception. Jiang Qing, a Confucian scholar in mainland China argues that Marxism-Leninism should “stay with a certain party”—Communist (Makeham 262), rather than becoming the guidelines of the whole nation. He believes, instead, *ru* needs to be reestablished as the “orthodox thought” and “national spirit” (Makeham 263). Although I cannot agree with Jiang about the religious aspect of *ru*, as mentioned before, I agree with him that *ru* should not be mixed up with Marxism. Marxism was basically and

mainly defined by the notion of class struggle, which was extremely severe during 19th century Europe. It analyzed the social problems based on the individual's social status. China of early 20th century was experiencing great social upheavals, so this school of thought was very helpful for understanding the situation of that time. However in a long run, to understand one nation most likely depends on understanding the mainstream culture of it. *Ru* has a history of more than 2500 years, and it has remained the leading role in the Chinese multi-cultural system. And the longtime makes it a comprehensive entity of Chinese values. This value system could by no means be replaced by a borrowed idea—Marxism—which is only less than two hundred years old since it's born, and which increasingly shows its shortcomings when dealing with new situations in China right now.

In their 1991 general preface to the series *Xiandai Xin Ruxue Yanjiu Congshu* 现代新儒学研究丛书 (New Confucian Studies), Fang Keli argues that “a Marxist perspective, point of view, and methodology” (Makeham 251) must be used when understanding and analyzing all the materials. Li Minghui follows this point, saying that Fang takes *ru* as “ideological struggle”, rather than “ordinary academic research”. (Makeham 251) I am not sure about whether this is an ideological struggle, but Fang does not provide a convincing reason why *ru* should be synthesized with Marxism, other than his ardent saying that using Marx's dichotomy to treat today's *ru*. The method is good, but no necessarily the only one.

As Fang admits that *ru* is the source materials, thus it is reasonable to have several, definitely more than one, ways to approach it, understand it, and explain it.

Marxism is one of the possibilities—using class struggle to understand Confucian classics, the same as if one uses feminism or modernism. They will enrich the classical works from different aspects, but the value of those works lies not in the various interpretations, but still in themselves. *Ru* should be viewed as Confucian classics, just like the classics of any other well-known authors in history. The classical works exist not because there are always -isms, but because they contain universal values. One may argue that there are so many differences between Confucius and those authors, i.e., they might be from different countries, different time period, even having different motives of literary creation. However, the good works represent not only their author, but also the era they are in. The existence and transmission of those classics lies more in their universal value that is shared by human beings. To understand *ru*, the most common way, and the most accessible way is to read the text, just like reading Shakespeare. Year after year, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and other classics of Shakespeare have been adapted to stage, big screen and many other forms. Different generations perceive the same value in the works, while have their own interpretations. Shakespeare is still Shakespeare, not becoming Shakespereanism. *Ru*, as far as this paper is concerned, the best translation is Confucian classics.

From above we can see that *ru* plays an important role in China. But the relationship between *ru* and nationalism still worth considering. Makeham quotes the idea of “*ru*-centered Chinese cultural nationalism”. (10) It is a very attractive way of saying, but it is very difficult to carry out in contemporary era. When talking about nationalism, there is often, if not always, a unifying force behind the word, most of the time is related to political structure. For example, in the US, individualism and

democracy are the two key notes of American nationalism. A lot of American movies are advocating and exporting this moral value. In China the unifying force, at least officially, is Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory, which have been accumulated since 1949. These are advocated in the public media and even written in the Constitution of China. Nationalism is often understood as patriotism. Since China is still a one-party state, to love the country is often the same as to love the political regime. *Ru* has no place in the Constitution of China or the regulations of Chinese Communist Party. From where people could start to take *ru* as nationalism is uncertain. So is the nationalism indeed *ru* or Marxism, or Confucianized Marxism or Marxized *ru*?

As an old Chinese saying goes, actually from Confucius himself, “if the name is not rectified, the words cannot go smoothly; if the words cannot go smoothly, the work cannot be fulfilled.” (《论语•子路》) When Confucius said this sentence, China was under the turbulent social upheavals. Everyone and everything were seeking a position in the society. To rectify the name was to establish oneself in the chaotic society. It was difficult, yet very important. *Ru* of today is experiencing the same situation as about 2500 years ago, seeking a position in society—to have its name rectified. After carrying out Reform and Open door policy, Chinese people were freed from the bound of single unified thought of Mao. I am not good at political rules, so I am not saying Mao’s thought is not good. At least, people shared the common belief during Mao’s period. However, by the end of 20th century, there was suddenly no such common belief anymore. Although the Party is still working on its thoughts, theory, and three represents, they have lost the power it once had under Mao.

Due to the vacuum of Chinese people's belief, some scholars turn back to history to look for something to rely on. *Ru* is the biggest relic from history, so it is dugged out without much effort. However, Chinese government has not provided *ru* with an appropriate name, although it has tried to promote it in many ways. For example, till 2011, Chinese government has established 350 Confucius Institutes outside China. The government admits that Confucius is the most representative symbol of Chinese culture, therefore using Confucius to name these institutes. However, the government official also says these institutes do not aim to promote Confucian culture, but Chinese language. Not until *ru* is given a matching position in the society—its name rectified, no one could start to talk about real *ru*.

Ru Represents Moral Individualism

As Metzger sees it, many scholars take Confucian values as “collectivistic” and *ru* as “ultimately putting the group above the self” (298). It is true that *ru* puts a lot of emphasis on harmony, in term of both social and family integrity. However, the process to reach harmony is not necessarily harmonious; actually it is full of individual struggle. In the Confucian system, hierarchy is carefully observed and boundary is strictly implemented. For example, if the guest's status is lower the host's, he should follow the host's step rather than walk on his left. This may change if the guest's status is elevated to a higher level later on. The whole Confucian society is like a pinpoint vertical scale, with every individual struggling to move up to the next standpoint. Although many Confucian thinkers might argue that true morality would elevate most of the society, it is undeniable that there are strict matching norms related to every act that an individual

performs. The definition of winner or loser is his moral achievement, not necessarily his position in government. Confucius, for his whole life, was unknown in the political system; yet he was regarded as sage, utmost teacher, because his individual moral achievement could not be surmounted. So he is pinned on top of this moral scale—uncrowned king in this world.

“Master You said, ‘When it comes to the practice of ritual, it is harmonious ease (he 和) that is to be valued. It is preciously such harmony that makes the Way of the Former Kings so beautiful. If you merely stick rigidly to ritual in all matters, great and small, there will remain that which you cannot accomplish. Yet if you know enough to value harmonious ease but try to attain it without being regulated by the rites, this will not work either.’” (Confucius 5)

As can be seen, harmony is indeed important; however to merely pursue harmony will bring side effect, even harmful result. It shows that only through constant individual struggle could one elevate one’s moral integrity in the hierarchy of this invisible world, to become a *junzi*.

During the integration of *ru* and political structure, those who are superior in Confucian classics are more likely to pass the Imperial Exam and get a position in government. This is definitely a most important reason why so many scholars are striving for it. However, a *junzi* should take this as his responsibility to work for the society, rather than seeking personal pleasure in it. Also a *junzi* should not be afraid when disaster comes, not joyful when fortune comes. (史记•孔子世家第十七) That

means, even if one loses his fortune in government—the real world, as long as he keeps his moral integrity, he is still a *junzi*—a high level person in the moral world.

In the American movies, a strong signal—individualism—is sent out by the main character’s hard working and final success in his personal life. Moral individualism is similar, yet its emphasis is not on material form, but on one’s moral achievement—one might be poor but noble-minded. In this sense, *ru* is a practical philosophy, in which personal moral achievement is highly esteemed. Tu Wei-ming believes that

Humanism in *ru* is very “comprehensive”. The study promotes harmony between man and nature, integrity of everything under heaven. The Confucian humanism is not a part of political force in society, yet it is about to participate the system. It is trying hard to transform the practical political system through perfecting one’s morality. From sage to king is the ultimate target of *ru*” (53).

A lot of western way of success, including Marxism, is the other way around. These thoughts start with the material success, such like to win in class struggle, then try to change the mind after that. The start points of the two ways of thoughts are completely different. It is unlikely that the two could be seated together.

Mou Zongsan believes that “What China’s traditional culture did have, however, been a rich and vibrant *daotong*. Indeed, it is this *daotong* that makes China’s traditional culture unique.”(Makeham 155) Li [Minghui] further explains that for Mou, the *daotong* is centrally concerned with “learning about the moral nature.”(Makeham 156) The reason why Confucius and his disciples won the dominant position in Chinese

philosophical field, compared to Taoism, Buddhism, was because it successfully married itself to the political system, which in Jin Guantao's term "great unity". The "ultra-stable system" (33-34) created by this unity led to a comparatively stable feudal society for over two thousand years (compared with slave society which has no clear historical record, capitalism that died before grown up; socialism that in the whole world is less than three hundred years old). Through this process, Confucian doctrines got widely spread and embraced by the intellectuals. And only those who were good at Confucian doctrines were entitled to gain a position in the political system, although in reality, some anthropic factors might disrupt the process. Other than that, morally-noble individuals were rewarded by a material form—an official position. In this way, both the Confucian school and the ruling class benefitted from this marriage. And the ideal of "from sage to king", i.e., from moral cultivation to political achievement, was reached in reality.

If "being good" is not convincing enough to explain the motivation behind Confucian scholars, to realize personal values is the one. "...I [Dirlik] think, in seeing in the whole Confucian revival an expression of elitist intellectual's efforts to reassert themselves by identifying popular values with their own, which also enables them to speak for whole society." (Dirlik 269) May Fourth Movement was the first peak of intellectuals trying to revive their social status. It did help the new intellectuals reenter the political realm. The reason why the intellectuals could win a position in early 20th century was because Chinese society lacked a dominant government. All schools of forces were mixed together, the previous dominant power—*ru*-centered Imperial Exam was abolished in 1905. At that time, the whole society was seeking for a way to fight

against Western powers. Traditional *ru* was therefore intentionally discarded, because of its weak response to Western voices. Western schools of thought “democracy” and “science”, acting as weapons for the new intellectuals, did great help in the process of winning back the leadership for the intellectuals. Though Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and many other intellectuals did not have the final leadership, it was greatly because of their lacking military forces and their own weak points. We are not going to talk about their failure in this paper. The 100 years of 20th century could be summarized as Chinese intellectuals’ pursuit of power, i.e., 1905 (lose)-1919-(gain)-1949 (lose)-now. After about 100 years’ search, Chinese intellectuals have lost most of their, if not all, influence in society. If we take the Imperial Examination as meritocracy, then the political system under Marxism is “class-tocracy”, in which certain classes claim the leadership.

In China now, there is a leading party. Its leading position is determined not by its moral ability, but based on class division—workers and farmers are the leading classes. Although the Party also makes appeal to moral leadership, the first thing taken into consideration is one’s political background. The policy of this leading party—Marxism—is actually from the West. Therefore the intellectuals, who are classified different from workers and farmers, i.e., not the political leaders, need to adjust their way. It is viable to explore in the Chinese own culture, as opposed to the Western theory. As a result, traditional culture—*ru*—is once again been pulled out of the relics and pushed into a position that stands against Marxism. Different from peasants, Chinese intellectuals are used to be part of the power core for centuries. “Tu had indeed expressed regrets over the loss of power by Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth

century. And his goal, above all, is to regenerate Chinese intellectuals to capture ideological power once again.” (Dirlik 270)

Conclusion

China has ended feudal society and established republic state for about a century. Both the people and the society have changed a lot since end of 19th century. The way people treat *ru* as of today should by no means be the same as one hundred years ago. As we have discussed in this paper, to regard *ru* as a religion is not plausible. To integrate the *ru* with Marxism will further confuse the situation, even bring trouble to the state. One possible way for now is to leave Confucian classics just as literary works. To promote *ru* will become to learn Confucian classics.

After implementing Reform and Open door policy, people of the past thirty years are exposed to Western culture. Among all the influences, individualism could be said as one of the most significant one. The Western individualism is often misunderstood as egoism in Chinese, which against the notion of harmony in *ru*. The two ideas seem conflict with each other. But as we discussed before, *ru* also could be taken as a kind of individualism, in terms of moral struggle. Therefore, to promote *ru* is not to advocate a new religion, is not to advocate feudal leftovers, and of course is not to advocate an ancient study that has no relationship to the society of today. On the contrary, to promote moral individualism will bring more common understanding to people from different areas. The statue of Confucius actually should not be removed, but enlarged, to make it a symbol of both individualism and harmony. Globalization is not only for economic area, but more for conceptual area.

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